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BUREAUCRATIC DECISIONMAKING IN THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS--ETC(U)

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BUREAUCRATIC DECISIONMAKING IN
THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM:
SOME EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

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UNITED STATES AIR FORCE PROJECT RAND
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SOME EMPIRICAL FINDINGS,

10) Robert Axelrod

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SUMMARY

This Memorandum explores three topics: alternative generation, bargaining relationships between different parts of a bureaucracy, and organizational learning. A small survey of twenty-five officials in six agencies dealing with the Military Assistance Program (MAP) was conducted.

Alternatives are rarely conceptualized as mutually exclusive packages. There are stereotyped policy positions for the various agencies involved in MAP; these positions are independent of personality and specific issues and are simplifiable into two dimensions. Officials report that although the war between India and Pakistan in 1965 was a very unfortunate event for MAP there were lessons from this crisis, and these lessons were applicable to other parts of the program; but they also said that almost no modifications were made in these other parts of the program.

Some of the implications of these and other findings are discussed, using such concepts as multiple determination and location of agencies in a policy space. Finally, a new set of research questions is presented, taking into account the empirical findings.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to inquire into the decisionmaking process of bureaucracies. More specifically, the purpose is to explore three questions:

- (a) How are alternatives generated?
- (b) What are the bargaining relationships between different parts of a bureaucracy?
- (c) How do organizations learn?

I selected a single functional area, the Military Assistance Program (MAP), with which I was already familiar, and conducted a small survey of twenty-five officials in the various agencies that deal with the program. The questionnaire is given in the Appendix with a summary of the respondents' answers for each question.

This research had the modest task of trying to improve understanding of how the process does, in fact, work and not to provide recommendations on how the process can be improved. Furthermore, this study reports empirical findings and discusses some of their implications, but it does not provide a definitive theoretical framework that can incorporate all the results.

UNIQUENESS OF THE MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Every program has many distinctive features that make its decision-making process different from the process in other areas. For the present purposes, the two most distinctive aspects of MAP are that it is both political and military, and that it is shrinking.

The fact that MAP does not fall neatly into either a political or a military framework has several important implications. First, success in the program is particularly hard to measure. Second, the rationale for specific parts of the program is sometimes far from clear. Finally, the political-military character of MAP means that responsibility for the program is diffuse, with a number of peripheral agencies playing strong roles.

The second distinctive feature of MAP is that it is a shrinking program. For example, in Fiscal Year 1961 the new obligational authority was \$1.9 billion, but in FY 1964 it was only \$1.0 billion, and for FY 1968 the President has requested only \$.6 billion. These figures exaggerate the extent of the cutback, because in recent years Vietnam-related expenses have been excluded from the program, and sales are replacing grants to a growing extent. Nevertheless, the size of the program has certainly been reduced faster than an incremental theory would predict.

Despite a rapid cutback in the size of the program, the decision process should not be thought of as an example displaying pathological features normally associated with shrinking programs. The reasons are not hard to find: (a) the top people in the program, the Secretary of Defense and his Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, have favored a reduction in the program; (b) the policymakers in Washington are thousands of miles away from where a cutback is most agonizing, and, most important, (c) the very high rate of job rotation in and out of the program means that no official in Washington is likely to lose a job if MAP has fewer funds the following year.

THE ORGANIZATIONAL SETTING

A central office in MAP is that of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ISA). ISA is a relatively small organization made up of both civilians and military men. The three parts that concern us are the Office of the Director of Military Assistance (ODMA), which is primarily a facilitator of grant aid; the various regional offices that do most of the programming of the grant part of the program; and International Logistics Negotiations (ILN), which handles the sales of arms. The Secretary of State has the authority by law to determine the value of military assistance programs to individual countries, and this authority had been delegated to the Administrator of the Agency for International Development (AID). Besides ISA, State, and AID, the other agencies that play significant roles are the National Security Council (NSC), the Bureau of the

Budget (BoB), and the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). To keep the study manageable, I have limited the survey to these six agencies (see Fig. 1).

Among them, these agencies incorporate nearly all of the decision-making processes of MAP insofar as it takes place within the Executive Branch in Washington. The other agencies that play a role from time to time include the Import-Export Bank, the Treasury Department, and the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Systems Analysis. Outside of Washington the country teams in the field are important. In addition to the Executive Branch, Congress, the American public, and the governments of the recipient countries all help shape outcomes. The military services also have an input, but most of it is channeled through either the Joint Chiefs of Staff or country teams. Not all of the decision process for MAP takes place within the Executive Branch in Washington.

MAP PROCEDURES

To understand the decisionmaking process, one must have at least a rough idea of the procedural as well as the organizational setting of a program. MAP has two sets of procedures, one for grants and one for sales. These procedures can get quite complex; a thick volume called the Military Assistance Manual prescribes some of them, and others are part of a less formal set of rules. The following skeleton description indicates how these procedures typically operate:

Grants

1. ISA gives dollar and policy guidelines, with State and AID approval
2. Country teams write rolling five-year plan
3. Unified commands approve
4. JCS forwards
5. ISA approves
6. BoB holds hearings
7. Congress allocates money

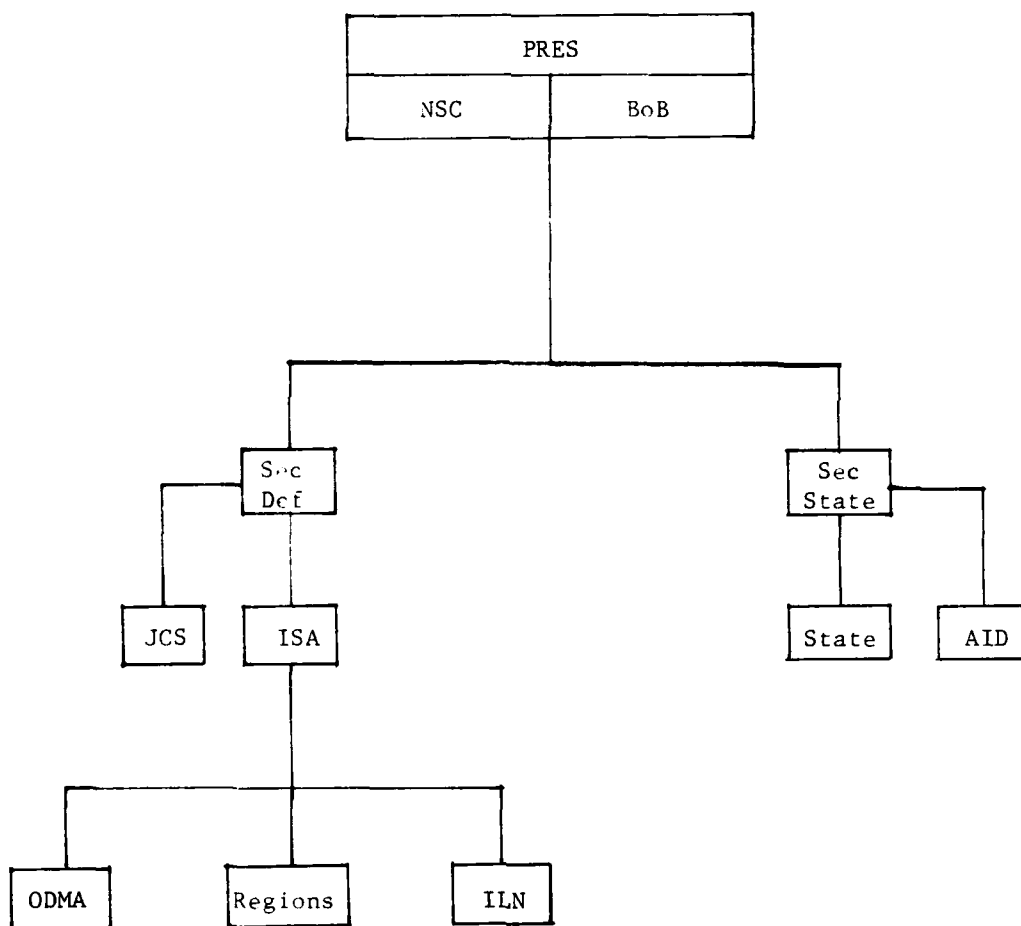


Fig. 1 -- Main Agencies Dealing with MAP

8. ISA reprograms during the year.

Sales

1. Recipient government makes a request
2. Country team comments
3. State approves
4. ILN negotiates.

Sales can usually be arranged much quicker than grants can. Typically, the programming of a grant item will take eighteen to twenty-four months. The shorter set of procedures for sales frequently allows them to be concluded within six months. Of course, with increased speed comes reduced coordination. Thus, many of the agencies that play an active role in determining the shape of the grant part of the program have difficulty in influencing what, and how much, is sold to whom. Although most arms sales are made to industrialized nations of Europe and hence need not concern us in this study, the arms sales to underdeveloped nations form a significant and growing segment of the Military Assistance Program.

THE SURVEY SAMPLE

The respondents were selected on the basis of their official positions so that the sample would have an appropriate distribution within each of four attributes: agency, region, rank, and civil-military. These distributions are shown in Fig. 2.

The regional distribution should probably have one or two fewer respondents in the Near East and South Asia area, and one or two more in the Far East. I deliberately oversampled the Near East because I expected more cancellations from it due to the Near East crisis that was still

By Agency

| | |
|---------|----------|
| ISA | 13 |
| top | 2 |
| regions | 6 |
| ODMA | 3 |
| ILN | 2 |
| State | 4 |
| AID | 3 |
| JCS | 3 |
| NSC | 1 |
| BoB | <u>1</u> |
| | 25 |

By Regions

| | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| Near East-South Asia | 6-1/2 |
| Far East | 4 |
| Latin America | 2-1/2 |
| Africa | 2/2 |
| Non-regional | <u>11</u> |
| | 25 |

By Rank

| | |
|--|-----------|
| High (Deputy Asst. Secty., Brigadier General, or equivalent) | 13 |
| Low | <u>12</u> |
| | 25 |

Civilian-Military

| | |
|----------|----------|
| Civilian | 17 |
| Military | <u>8</u> |
| | 25 |

Fig. 2 -- Distribution of the survey sample

active during the three weeks in July 1967 when the interviewing was done. However, no harm was done since respondents in the Near East-South Asia region were especially helpful because this region includes the two crises I specifically asked about, namely, the war between India and Pakistan in 1965 and the war in the Near East in 1967.

Each of the four attributes was correctly distributed with respect to the others. For example, respondents dealing with each of the regions were drawn for several different agencies. The added restrictions of cross-distributions meant that the sample was not random in the strict sense, but was instead a highly controlled, stratified sample designed to include the correct distribution and cross distribution of each of the four attributes.

CAVEATS

Two caveats that have already been discussed are that the decision process in MAP has several distinctive features stemming from the political-military character, and that only the part of the process was examined that takes place within the executive branch in Washington. Another is that a survey relies on the respondents' perceptions. However, the interview schedule was designed to elicit information on specific actions the respondent himself had taken, and for many purposes -- such as which problems are felt to be serious and which alternatives are live options -- perceptions are exactly what matter.

A final caveat is that the results are based on only twenty-five interviews. This limitation is mitigated to some extent by the good distribution of the respondents and by their openness. Their openness is exemplified by the fact that I received the "party line" only once, and a number of times I was told about sensitive proposals that have not yet surfaced even within the bureaucracy. Still another factor mitigating the effects of the small sample is that the number of people working on the program is not very large anyway. As a very rough approximation, the sample included 8 of the top 15 people, 9 of the next 15, and 8 of the next 100 officials dealing with the program in the executive branch in Washington. In other words, the survey was very roughly a one-in-three sample of some generalized notion of influence in the program. Finally, despite the fact that only twenty-five interviews were conducted, some results are overwhelming.

II. ALTERNATIVE GENERATION

The question of how alternatives are generated can best be approached in the broader context of how problems are perceived and dealt with. The respondents were therefore asked the following series of questions:

- 6a. Now let me ask you this: what would you list as the two most important problems facing MAP today? (For both of them, ask questions 6b through 11.)
- 6b. Now let's take the problem of _____. Has this always been a problem, or where did it come from?
- 6c. How did it come to your attention?
- 7a. What can be done about it?
- 7b. What else can be done?
- 7c. Did you devise these proposals, or where did they come from?
- 8a. What have you personally done about the problem?
- 8b. Has this helped? How?
- 8c. (If appropriate) Why hasn't your proposal been successful?

TYPE OF PROBLEM

There were no big surprises on the types of problems raised, so the results can be given quickly (see Fig. 3). The problems can be divided into those referring to policy and those referring to process. Under policy problems, only one-third were based on insufficient funds, which is considerably fewer than expected. On the other hand, half of the respondents mentioned Congress as one of the two most important problems facing the Military Assistance Program.

There were fewer process problems, and nearly all of these dealt with either the need for more analysis or the need for other parts of the Executive Branch to attain an understanding of things as the respondent sees them. The difference between a problem of analysis

| | | |
|-------------------------|----|----------|
| Policy | | 34 |
| Specific programs | 23 | |
| Funds | 15 | |
| Congress | 13 | |
| Process | | 18 |
| Understanding | 8 | |
| Analysis | 6 | |
| Procedures | 4 | |
| No second problem given | | <u>1</u> |
| Total | | 50 |

Note:

Numbers do not sum because a problem can be classified under several headings.

Fig. 3 -- Types of problems

and one of understanding is that analysis means the respondent admits the need for more information, while insufficient understanding means someone else in the Executive Branch is supposed to need more information because he does not understand something.

ORIGIN OF PROPOSALS

Next come the more interesting questions about where problems and proposals come from. After the respondent mentioned a problem, I intended to ask how that problem came to his attention. It nearly always turned out to be a foolish question. For example, if the problem was that Congress was not providing sufficient funds, one could hardly ask how that came to his attention. In fact, for only four people was there a clear answer on either problem to the question of how it came to his attention.

After eliciting proposals for what can be done about the problem, I intended to take the most specific proposal and ask the respondent whether he devised it, or where it came from. Once again, this was often a foolish question. As an example, consider the following problem and proposals offered by an arms salesman:

Problem: There is an increasing sense of no urgency with respect to military capabilities around the world.

Proposals:

1. More public statements emphasizing the problem;
2. More reasonable sales terms to promote sales;
3. More technical assistance;
4. Better relations between our military services and the services of the recipients;
5. A posture of "understanding insistence" [which I take to mean, "we understand your problems, but do it our way."]

This example is unusual in that the problem is stated with very wide applicability, and the list of proposals is rather long, but it serves to illustrate how useless it can be to ask the origin of a proposal.

The summary of where proposals did come from is given in Fig. 4. For less than a quarter of the problems did the respondent give a source for the origin of either of his proposals. These sources were divided between the staff in the field or a recipient government (three times), his own immediate office (three times), and himself (five times).

| | |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Diffuse | 34 |
| (foolish even to ask) | 29 |
| not known or no | |
| distinct place | 5 |
| Field or recipient | 3 |
| Own immediate office | 3 |
| Self | <u>5</u> |
| | 45 |
| No problem or no proposal | <u>5</u> |
| | 50 |

Fig. 4 -- Origin of proposals

The numbers are obviously not a good indication of where proposals really do originate. Not once was another agency in Washington given credit for devising a proposal. Furthermore, three proposals credited to the field or a recipient government must be a very drastic

underestimate of their role in formulating problems and suggesting what can be done about them. Answers to a later question about the role of the country team indicate that the field plays a major role in virtually every part of the policy process except the final making of a binding decision: they give information on such things as local threat and the recipient's ability to handle various types of equipment; they predict the recipient's reactions to possible American policies; they warn of future issues; they suggest a five-year plan that meets policy and dollar guide lines; and they are in charge of implementing the program. Nevertheless, the field is rarely given credit for originating a proposal.

Indeed, rarely is anyone given credit for devising a proposal, and rarely does a problem come to one's attention from a distinct source. The reason for this seems to be that problems and proposals are regarded as "obvious," and do not require a burst of originality to uncover. The example of a sense of no urgency with respect to military capabilities, and the suggestion that more public statements are needed, illustrates this.

But to say that most problems and proposals do not have distinct sources because they are regarded as obvious raises the question of why some are obvious and not others, and why what is obvious to one man is far from clear to another. Perhaps the explanation is that problems and proposals are multiply determined: problems that are raised only once are probably not often regarded as serious, and it seems that proposals that are suggested by only one person are not often retained as salient options. So the problems and proposals that are regarded as most significant have been brought to the respondent's attention in many different ways and therefore rarely have distinct sources.

Multiple determination helps explain another unanticipated result. When asked if there were any problems that are not sufficiently recognized, only six people were able to name one. This is a surprisingly low number in view of the complexity of the program. The explanation is probably the one offered spontaneously by a number of respondents,

namely, that all the important problems are recognized as problems but do not always get the attention or action they merit. This supports the notion that the perceived significance of a problem is related to the multiplicity of ways in which it is brought to one's attention. Thus, although there is no precise consensus among officials on which are the most serious problems, nearly everyone believes that each of the problems they find significant are at least recognized as problems by most of the others.

TYPES OF PROPOSALS

In exploring the first major question -- how alternatives are generated -- some evidence and its implications on the nature of the generation process has been examined. The next issue is, Exactly what is being generated? When a typical respondent suggested several things in response to the questions, "What can be done about this problem?" and "What else can be done?" what structure does his list of proposals have?

One possibility, and the one that we tend to think of first, is that the proposals will contain a short list of mutually exclusive alternatives. The actual results are clear enough to require almost no comment: the respondents rarely think in terms of mutually exclusive alternatives. (See Fig. 5.) Instead, the most common structure by far allows a list of proposals to be implemented in any combination. The earlier example illustrates the point. Just because more public statements are given does not mean that more reasonable sales terms cannot also be given. And if either or both of these proposals were implemented, they would not preclude any of the other suggestions. The various tools or instruments at one's disposal are rarely conceptualized as mutually exclusive packaged alternatives; instead they retain their separate identities. This is true even for the senior officials within the Office of the Secretary of Defense, despite McNamara's strong emphasis on the value of distinct alternatives to the decisionmaking process.

| | | |
|---|----|----------|
| Mutually exclusive lists | 1 | |
| Partially structured lists | 3 | (11) |
| Go/no-go (one of the two proposals not addressed to the problem) | 1 | (2) |
| Contingency (one of the proposals feasible only if another is employed) | 0 | (4) |
| Undesirable (one of the proposals given for the sake of demon- strating its undesirability) | 2 | (3) |
| Facetious (one of the proposals impossible to implement and listed for its comic value) | 0 | (2) |
| Non-structured lists | | 44 |
| Combination (proposals usable in any combination) | 33 | |
| Single option (only one proposal given) | 8 | |
| Nothing listed | 3 | |
| Unclassified (no second problem, or proposals not discussed) | | <u>2</u> |
| Total | | 50 lists |

Note:

Numbers in parentheses are occurrences as parts of lists. Thus contingencies are included as parts of four lists, but none of these lists was completely structured as contingencies.

Fig. 5 -- Kinds and numbers of lists of alternatives

III. BARGAINING RELATIONSHIPS

The second major question the survey was designed to explore was the bargaining relationships between different parts of the bureaucracy. Specific items in the interview schedule were included to provide data on the competitiveness of the bargaining process, the individual styles of the respondents, the perception of influence, and the attributed policy positions of the various agencies.

COMPETITIVENESS OF THE PROCESS

The results on the competitiveness of the bargaining process contain no surprises. There is usually interagency disagreement (Question 9).^{*} Not infrequently there is also disagreement within one's own agency (Question 11). Compromise is sometimes easy and sometimes hard (Question 10). When asked what happens if one agency gets what it has been advocating, almost half of the respondents said the others can be pretty well satisfied too, half said the others cannot also be satisfied, and a few said that the others cannot also win but at least they can feel they have had a fair hearing (Question 17).

INDIVIDUAL STYLES

More interesting are the two questions on individual styles. These were quite often answered with an expression that seemed to mean, "That's a ridiculous question -- everyone knows what the answer is." But then half the people answered one way and half answered the other way.

In response to Question 15, a bit more than half of the officials said that if they had final authority to make a decision they would not sacrifice much effort in trying to get general agreement. The others stressed the importance of making sure the other parts of the Government find the decision acceptable. Answers ranged from a colonel who said he had been brought up to make decisions and he did not want a

^{*} The wording of the questions and the distribution of responses is given in the Appendix.

lot of "garbage input" from other agencies, to an AID official who said that no single person could make the best decision because he would not have enough information, and that general agreement is sometimes necessary so as not to force anyone to lose too much.

Question 16 was simply, "Some people enjoy taking part in conflicts or disputes between agencies and others don't want to get involved. How about you?" Half the people answered one way and half the other, but I got the feeling that behind their replies was the attitude that anyone with any intelligence would know what the answer was. For example, of two officials in ISA, one said that of course he did not enjoy conflicts and tried to avoid them, although he welcomed an exchange of facts, opinions, and judgments by other people gripped with the same problems. The other official said that he enjoyed conflict a lot; it made life worth living; matching of wits was fun. Another ISA respondent even said that the decisionmaking process was an Hegelian dialectic, with a thesis, antithesis, and synthesis.

PERCEPTION OF INFLUENCE

Two opposing theories exist about how officials perceive influence. One view says that everyone will say that he just contributes to the process but the decisions are actually made elsewhere. The opposite theory was exemplified by one of the respondents who said the MAP policy process is like 10,000 red ants on a log floating downstream, each thinking he is guiding the log. Actually neither theory is supported by the evidence collected in this survey.

Outside of the Executive Branch in Washington, the country teams were thought of as playing a significant role by two-thirds of the respondents (Question 13), and Congress was unanimously regarded as being a very important power to contend with in the Military Assistance Program (Questions 6 and 14). In fact, when asked about whether the top policymakers worry much about the public, almost everyone spontaneously changed the terms of the question and said the top people certainly do worry about Congress.

AGENCY POSITIONS

Perhaps the most surprising result of this study is that stereotyped policy positions for the various agencies involved in the Military Assistance Program are seen to be:

1. Independent of personality;
2. Predictive;
3. Reliable;
4. Independent of the issue; and
5. Simplifiable into two dimensions.

First, stereotypes of agency positions can be applied to an agency quite independently of specific personalities. For example, when respondents were asked what other parts of the Executive Branch think should be done about the problem the respondent raised (Question 9), they were able to reply on an agency-by-agency basis. Although many people drew distinctions between one part of an agency and another, no one said that he was unable to specify agency positions because it all depended on personalities. Sometimes people said that they did not want to speak for other agencies, but once I assured them that I was also going to talk to people in those agencies, they were quite willing to attribute policy preferences to them.

Second, these attributed preferences are predictive. A large proportion of the respondents felt that they could predict what each of the other agencies would say on a given problem.

Third, they were reliable. Of the more than one hundred policy positions attributed to other agencies and to one's own agency, over 90 percent were consistent with each other.*

Fourth, and most surprising, the positions were independent of the issue at hand. To give a fictitious example, what the Philippine desk officer in the State Department thinks AID will say to a proposal to give more planes to the Philippines will nearly be similar to what a general in the JCS will expect AID to say about having more tanks sent to Peru. Furthermore, when an AID official dealing with the Near East is interviewed, the problems he thinks are important and the proposals he offers to deal with them will almost certainly be consistent with the expectations of the desk officer and the general. It rarely matters who you see or what issue they are discussing; stereotyped agency positions exist, they are used for predictions, and they are actually correct.

Fifth, the stereotyped positions can be represented in terms of two policy dimensions. The more important dimension is pro-weapons versus anti-weapons. The operative question here is whether the agency favors more weapons for countries such as Peru, Ethiopia, or Korea. The second dimension is pro-grants versus pro-sales. Here the question is whether the agency favors more grants or more sales within a given program. To return once again to the arms salesman in the ILN sub-agency of ISA and his sample problem, it is not hard to see that his concern with a sense of "no urgency" with respect to military capabilities reflects a pro-weapons attitude, and his proposal for "more reasonable" sales terms reflects a pro-sales attitude. Of course, what classifies as a pro-weapons or pro-sales attitude is relative to what others are advocating, so that the same opinion may have meant quite different things in 1957 than it does in 1967.

Although most problems that the respondents raised were more specific than this example, it was often easy to determine the respondent's position on the two policy dimensions, as well as

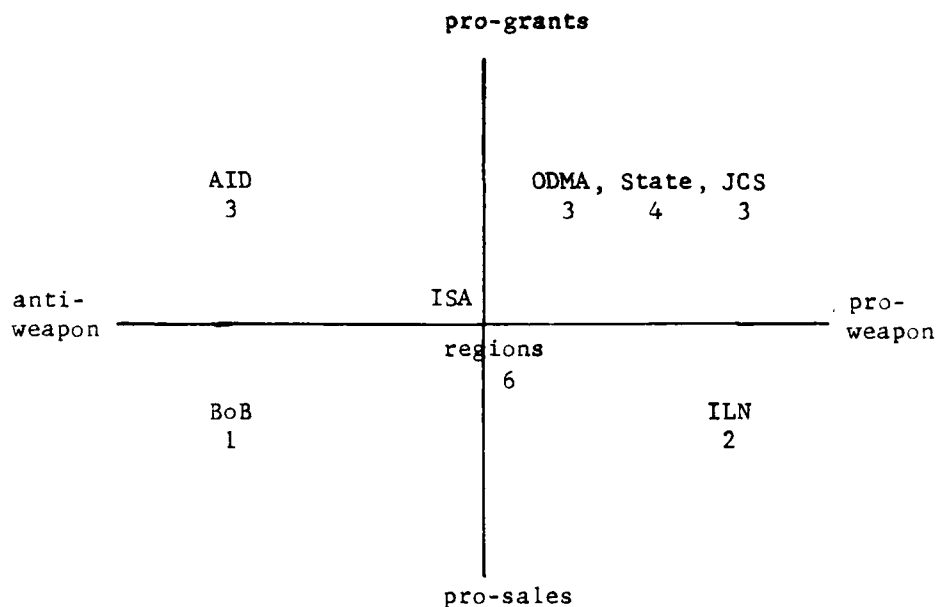
* This excludes positions attributed to the ISA regions for reasons explained below.

positions he attributed to other agencies. Nearly all issues could be described in terms of these two dimensions.

Within ISA three subagencies are distinguishable: ODMA, which is primarily a facilitator of grant aid; the regional offices, which do most of the programming of grants; and ILN, which handles the sales. This gives six agencies (or subagencies) in which more than one person was interviewed: ODMA, ISA regions, ILN, State, AID, and JCS. There is a very high degree of consensus on the positions of each of these agencies on each dimension, except for the ISA regions for which there is no clear consensus. The ISA regions have been arbitrarily placed in the center on the two policy dimensions, and the other five agencies can be placed in the correct quadrants of the two-dimensional policy space shown in Fig. 6. As Table 1 indicates, only 9 of the 104 codable positions are inconsistent with the positions shown in the figure for these five agencies. In the figure, the weapons dimension is no longer than the sales/grants dimension because it is more important on most policy problems.

Information was not solicited for the separate divisions of ISA, but enough was obtained to distinguish the positions of ODMA, the regions, and ISA. Although no systematic data were obtained for the position of the Bureau of the Budget, my previous personal experience leads me to believe that it is safe to assume BoB is anti-weapon and pro-sales as shown in Fig. 6. Not shown in the figure because of insufficient evidence is the position of the NSC (which I would guess is pro-sales) and the top of ISA (which seems near the center but somewhat anti-weapon and pro-sales).

If it is possible to position agencies in a policy space, then research on bureaucratic bargaining may not be quite as difficult as has often been supposed. For example, the isolated position AID has in the policy space may explain (at least in part) the earlier finding that no one attributed much power to AID. As still



NOTE: Numbers indicate how many people were interviewed.
Positions are not shown for the NSC (1), or the top of ISA (2).

Fig. 6 -- Policy Positions

Table 1

ATTRIBUTED AND SELF-ATTRIBUTED POLICY POSITIONS BY AGENCY

| Agencies | Pro-weapon | Anti-weapon | Pro-grant | Pro-sales |
|-------------|------------|-------------|-----------|-----------|
| ISA Regions | 8 | 19 | 4 | 2 |
| State | 29 | (2) | 5 | (2) |
| AID | (2) | 15 | 5 | (1) |
| JCS | 22 | (1) | 5 | (1) |
| ILN | 1 | 0 | 0 | 6 |
| ODMA | 5 | 0 | 2 | 0 |

NOTE: The inconsistent responses are in parentheses.

another example, the similar policy positions of State and JCS suggest a possible explanation of why the political and military rationales for the program stay blurred. Finally, the distribution of agencies in the policy space suggests that the main cleavage in the Washington bureaucracy is probably between State and JCS (with the support of ODMA) on one hand and on the other the ISA regions.

Lest the reader take this optimistic theme too seriously, let him beware of limitations on an analysis of bargaining in MAP based on agency stereotypes. First, the ISA regions were placed in the center because there was not a clear consensus on where they belonged. Second, due to insufficient data, the top echelon of ISA was not placed at all (although they are, I believe, similar to the regions on most issues). Thus, the most important parts of the bureaucracy cannot be reliably described by simple stereotypes. Third, even reliable predictions on agency positions do not indicate how hard a given agency will fight on a given issue. One criterion for how hard someone is expected to fight is how important the issue is to him, but another criterion is whether he thinks fighting will help him improve the outcome. One agency can usually guess what another agency will advocate on any given issue, but predicting how hard they will fight is much more difficult. This uncertainty is one of the things that keeps bureaucratic politics exciting. Another important reason why agency stereotypes cannot give the full richness to the bargaining process is that there is a conviction throughout the bureaucracy that there is such a thing as the national interest, and the job of all government officials is to discover it and promote it. But even after all this is said, the existence of reliable agency policy stereotypes, which do not depend on the particular issue at hand and which can be represented in a simple two-dimensional space, bodes well for the study of bargaining in bureaucracies.

The existence of a policy space in which agencies are positioned may also be useful in explaining the earlier finding that officials do not think in terms of mutually exclusive packaged alternatives. Why should they? They do not need to know how far they want the policy

to move, only the direction in which they want it to go. For example, the arms salesman in ILN is pulling for more generous sales terms, but he does not have to decide just how generous -- at least not until he wins a number of bureaucratic fights and is in danger of getting sales terms more generous than even he wants. If packaging of alternatives is often unnecessary for an official, it suggests that when it is done, that is, when someone recommends a specific point in the policy space rather than just a direction or a vague area, this may be based on bargaining considerations and not represent what his first preference is at all. Thus, the specific form in which a proposal gets packaged as an alternative may depend more on an estimate of bargaining strength than on the merits of that particular proposal. Furthermore, the official may be quite willing to give up one alternative and advocate another as his perception of his prospects changes. If the researcher is looking for a stable aspect of this process he is more likely to find it in the general direction in which each agency is pulling, rather than in the specific alternative each proposes.

Other implications for the nature of the alternative generation process follow from the obvious thought that the policy space of MAP is not "lumpy" and may not be lumpy for other programs either. However, if the space is continuous rather than lumpy, common notions such as "an individual can only conceptualize three or four outcomes at once" must be put aside. Anyone can think of a whole range of outcomes. If proposals are packaged (for example, three public speeches next month and one-half percent lower interest rate on sales payments) then obviously little effort is required to unpack this alternative and make another one (for example, two speeches and three-fourths percent lower). Once again, this suggests that alternative generation may be an elusive aspect of the policy process.*

*Of course if the issue is whether to build a fixed or variable geometry airplane, the space is lumpy. Nevertheless, there are many important policy variables left that are inherently continuous, such as how many dollars will be spent over what length of time and for how many planes.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL LEARNING

How do organizations learn? That is to say, how do they use experience to adapt their behavior? The approach to the question of organizational learning was to ask the respondents a series of questions about two recent events -- the war between India and Pakistan in 1965, and the 1967 Near East war. The India/Pakistan war was chosen because it was thought to be such a major negative stimulus to MAP that organizational learning would be fairly easy to identify. The survey provided abundant evidence that the war between India and Pakistan was certainly regarded as a major disaster for MAP by the respondents: Both sides used American-supplied military equipment against each other, and Congressional and public support for the entire Military Assistance Program was eroded to such an extent that several other problems mentioned by the respondents date their origin to this war. Another reason the India/Pakistan war was used is that enough time has elapsed (two years) to determine whether any lessons are likely to be applied elsewhere, but the crisis is still recent enough so that any such applications are not likely to have been forgotten.

The Near East war of 1967 was chosen because it bore certain similarities (an arms race; a war with American equipment being used on both sides; a rapid American response of an arms cutoff, and so on), and because the interviews could be conducted three to six weeks after hostilities began and while the repercussions were still reverberating in Washington.

The questions were these:

- 19a. Now I'd like to ask you about the war between India and Pakistan two years ago. Are there any lessons for MAP from that experience? What would they be?
- 19b. Do these lessons apply anywhere else? Where?
- 19c. Has the program been modified there?
- 19d. Did the changes help?
- 19e. How do you know?

20. Now let me ask you about the recent crisis in the Near East. Did the India-Pakistan experience help meet these new problems? How?

21a. Are there any lessons for MAP from the NE crisis? What would they be?

21b. Where else are these lessons applicable?

21c. How do you think the programs there should be modified?

21d. Is this the kind of proposal about which there is much disagreement? Why is that?

The results are given in Fig. 7. As can be readily seen, nearly everyone thought there were lessons for MAP from the India/Pakistan war, and nearly everyone was able to cite other instances in which the lesson could be applied. But when asked if the program had been modified there, less than half could say yes, and when the reasons for these modifications were examined, most of the modifications turned out to be not by choice of the Executive Branch, but rather because of such things as Congressional funding cuts. Only three respondents were able to give an example of a modification in another country's program that was a result of the Executive Branch's application of a lesson of the India/Pakistan war.

When asked if the India/Pakistan experience helped meet the new problems raised by the Near East crisis, the vast majority of the respondents asserted that one event was not relevant to the other. However, one State Department official who was personally involved in both said that some old papers were pulled out and did prove useful, and many things were recalled from memory. However, he said that the usefulness of the previous experience was primarily in smoothing channels within the American Government and in helping to expedite the implementation of policy rather than in providing lessons for the new policy to use. Two high officials in JCS and ISA who also participated in both crises gave similar accounts.

When asked about the Near East crisis, most respondents did think there were lessons for MAP, and these lessons were applicable elsewhere. There was a dropoff in the number who responded positively to the

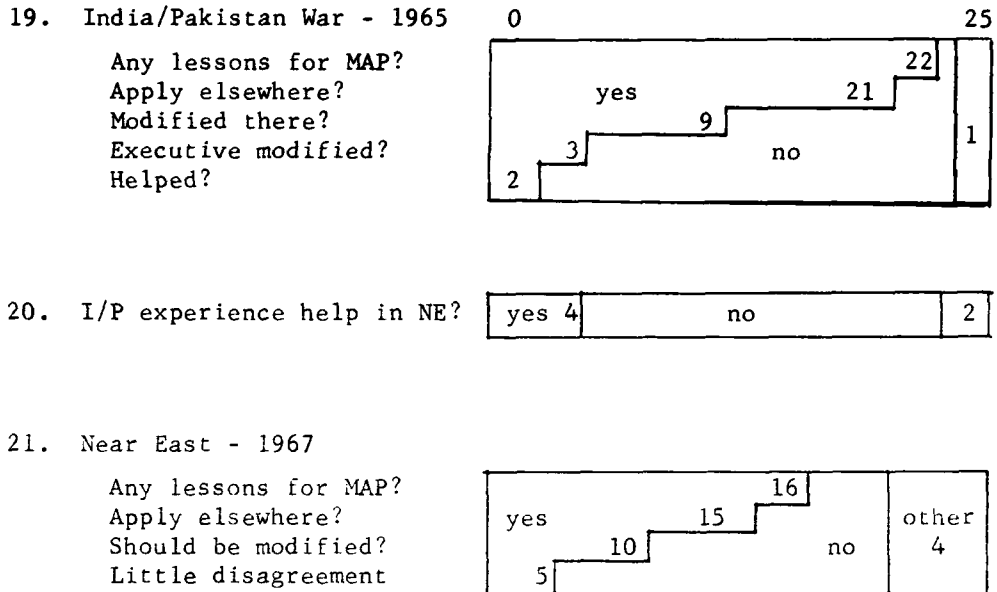


Fig. 7 -- Crisis lessons

question of whether any of these other programs should be modified, and only five people thought their suggestions for modifications were not likely to meet much disagreement. In other words, a consensus on how MAP should be modified elsewhere to take into account lessons of the Near East is completely lacking. This result parallels the finding that only three people were able to cite a modification in some other part of the world that was an application of the India/Pakistan war and that was initiated by the Executive Branch.

It should not be concluded from these figures that no one learned anything. After all, Congress certainly changed its behavior and became much more critical of all of MAP after the India/Pakistan war. And the executive department officials I talked with cited examples of other branch countries applying lessons from that war also. An example, cited in Aviation Week and Space Technology, is given below:

One setback to U.S.-Iran relations was the lesson the Shah learned in the September 1965 fighting between India and Pakistan. The U.S. cut off spare and other military supplies to Pakistan, another Moslem country. "The Shah

then realized we could cripple his war machine by cutting off spares," explained a U.S. official. This prompted him to seek other sources of supply, which led to the barter agreement with the Soviets.*

Of course there was some learning in the Executive Branch in Washington. The programs directly involved in both wars were dramatically changed (at least in the short run), and some details concerning the implementation of policy were learned in one crisis and applied in the next. But many of the respondents would have agreed with a junior ISA official whose first thought was, "I suppose there are lessons, but I'm not sure we learned any of them."

What, then, was the difficulty? The location of the bottleneck can be specified with some assurance for the India/Pakistan case. The event was seen to be very unfortunate for MAP, there were lessons, these lessons were seen to be applicable elsewhere, but then it seems nothing was done by the bureaucracy to modify the other programs where these lessons applied.

There are a host of possible explanations for this peculiar pattern. One might say that there were, in fact, modifications elsewhere, but that the respondents refused to admit it because that would be equivalent to admitting they did not understand their own programs before. Or one could give a variety of explanations as to why there was no adaptation. The first of these is the obvious possibility that they knew the lessons beforehand and, hence, did not have to make any modifications. For example, two magazine editorials published a week before the interviewing began pointed out lessons of the Near East crisis, but the lessons conformed to what each magazine had been advocating long before this crisis. According to Aviation Week and Space Technology:

The major political lesson, which still seems to escape many people in Washington, is that the Soviet leaders' policy is as ferociously anti-American as ever and they will go to almost any lengths short of a direct nuclear war to implement their implacable hatred of the West.**

*Aviation Week and Space Technology, August 7, 1967, p. 54.

**Aviation Week and Space Technology, June 26, 1967, p. 11.

The Saturday Review stated:

Fundamentally, a lesson to be learned from recent events is that any attempt to make peace or keep peace, or any attempt to invoke law, must rest on abstract, objective concepts of justice, self-evident to a world consensus if not to some of those directly affected.*

Both editorials saw a lesson that was applicable elsewhere, but their lesson was hardly something new to them and hence need not have led to any modification in their previous attitudes. Perhaps the same was true for the respondents.

Still other possibilities abound. Perhaps individuals did learn something new, but no modifications were made in the programs because different individuals learned different things. Perhaps the individual lessons were consistent, but for any given program there were so many other policy considerations and commitments that the lessons had to be ignored. Perhaps sheer inertia in the bureaucracy made it easier to continue with current plans rather than accept short run costs to apply a lesson that might lower the probability of another war. Or perhaps the lessons were not applied because no heads rolled in the State Department or Defense Department after the India/Pakistan fiasco.

There is one explanation, however, that is consistent with a number of these seemingly contradictory possibilities. This explanation employs the concept of multiply determined policy, which was found to be useful earlier in explaining why problems and proposals did not have clear sources. Perhaps the experience of India/Pakistan or the Near East war did indeed indicate good reasons for making modifications in other programs, but there are also dozens of other reasons that arise every year for making modifications in every program. And, in fact, modifications are made in almost every year in almost every program. But for a respondent to say, for example, that a certain change was made in a Latin American program because of the India/Pakistan experience would be overstating the case to the point of gross distortion. Still, that experience may have been one of

*The Saturday Review, June 24, 1967, p. 20.

the many factors leading to change, and in this special sense learning may have taken place. This interpretation is supported by the kinds of words the respondents used to describe the effect of the India/Pakistan experience: "it underlined the lesson that...", "it was a ghost that haunted us," or "since then we have been more cautious about...." These terms suggest that a major negative stimulus can contribute to determining future behavior without being the sole cause of some modification.

The finding can be related to the earlier discussions of alternatives and bargaining. Perhaps the learning of lessons from a crisis takes the form of modifications in the relative seriousness with which a wide variety of problems and alternatives are taken, rather than directly in the form of modifications in programs. Bargaining relations need not be changed even by a serious crisis, because different agencies might draw different lessons each consistent with its own previous policy position.

V. STUDYING BUREAUCRATIC DECISIONMAKING

This study began with three simple questions: how are alternatives generated?; what are the bargaining relationships between different parts of the bureaucracy?; and how do organizations learn? The research findings demonstrate that in some ways these questions rest on false assumptions. For example, the proposals generated are not mutually exclusive alternatives, the generation process rarely provides distinct sources for proposals, and even though a lesson is perceived and seen to be widely applicable it need not lead to identifiable modifications in programs.

This suggests the need for a new set of questions that will take these findings into account. In addition, other findings about how proposals are dealt with and how agencies bargain provide insights into just how these questions might be formulated. The purposes of the new questions are to help guide future research into bureaucratic decisionmaking and to organize the information gathered on how decisionmaking works in MAP.

The new questions are shown below;^{*} as innocuous as they seem, each relies on several very strong assumptions:

Main Question

- (A) What governmental outputs emerge?
- (B) from what efforts to alleviate which problems?
- (C) by which agencies in what manner?

A. Rational

What governmental objectives are sought through what governmental policies?

B. Organizational Process

What demands increase and what instruments are used to decrease the seriousness of what problem on whose list?

C. Bureaucratic Politics

Which agencies use what tactics to pull with how much effort in what policy space on which issues in what direction?

^{*} Graham Allison helped me formulated these questions.

The main question assumes that officials conceptualize their jobs as involving the alleviation of problems. This assumption is consistent with the evidence from the present study, but conceivably in other programs the main task might be the grasping of opportunities. The third part of the main question assumes that agencies are cohesive with respect to shared preferences and common action. Again, this assumption is valid for MAP but is still a very strong assumption. One thing the main question does not assume is that decisions are made. Instead, the phrase "governmental outputs emerge" is meant to suggest that important outcomes may occur without anyone making a deliberate decision. To avoid begging the question of whether decisions are the crucial unit of analysis, the subject of the new set of questions is "what happens in a bureaucracy."

The first specific question incorporates a rational conception of what happens by asking "what governmental objectives are sought through what governmental policy?" This question assumes that the bureaucracy can be described as a unitary rational actor doing a means-end analysis to determine its behavior. Clearly, this assumption is almost always false, and is certainly not true for MAP. Nevertheless, for a first look at what is happening in a given program, the question of what governmental objectives are sought through what policies is a useful one. In the case of MAP, the overall objectives and policy are set forth in the annual Presidential statement to Congress on the foreign aid bill. For a more incisive examination of a program one must understand what happens within the bureaucracy. The questions on organizational process and bureaucratic politics should help in this regard.

The organizational process question, as formulated here, asks "what demands increase and what instruments are used to decrease the significance of what problem on whose list?" This question assumes that officials have lists of problems that can be ordered by their importance, that demands that tend to increase the priority of certain problems are made on the official, and he has certain instruments of government policy that he consciously tries to use to alleviate different problems. All these assumptions are supported by the

evidence for MAP. Note, however, that the organizational process question does not assume that alternatives are generated.

The answer for MAP to the organizational process question comes in several parts. The demands come largely from the field and Congress, with the importance of each demand evaluated largely in terms of the official's conception of the mission of his agency. Instruments to deal with problems are suggested by many different sources, or are implicit in the definition of the problem. Two instruments that are often important are the reallocation of money and the re-allocation of one's own time. One's own time can be used to buy a better analysis of the problem (to increase the efficiency of the other instruments) or for advocacy (to persuade or bargain with other agencies). All in all, instruments are not very effective. For example, more public speeches, more generous sales terms, and more technical assistance will probably not go very far if the problem is an increasing sense of "no urgency" with respect to military capabilities around the world. The problem may be alleviated to some extent, but it will remain a serious problem. Finally, each person's list of problems reflects his agency's goals. Although there is no precise consensus among officials on which are the most serious problems, few people believe that all the problems they find serious are not at least recognized as problems by most of the others. The relative seriousness with which different problems are taken may be modified as a result of lessons learned from a crisis.

The specific question on bureaucratic politics that the MAP findings suggest is: "Which agencies use what tactics to pull with how much effort in what policy space on which issues in what direction?" This formulation assumes that there exist agency positions that are largely independent of personalities and specific issues. It also assumes these positions can be represented in a simple policy space. These assumptions do, indeed, work for MAP. The policy space has a pro-weapons/anti-weapons dimension and a sales/grants dimension, and the positions of the various agencies have been determined. What is still not understood is how hard an agency will pull on a given issue, and what particular tactics will be employed.

Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE

Note: Each question is followed by the number of respondents who gave a specific answer. Unless otherwise noted, the number who answered each question is twenty-five.

Information noted before interview:

Name
Organization (see Fig. 2)
Position (see Fig. 2)
Rank (see Fig. 2)
Date of Interview
Place

1. As you may know, I'm studying how decisions are made in the Military Assistance Program as part of RAND's work on MAP. I won't attribute anything to you, and I have a Top Secret clearance, so if you want to discuss classified matters that's all right. First of all, I'd like to get a little background information on you, if I may. (If not already known) What is your job here?

2. How long have you had this job?

15 more than one year

3. What proportion of your time would you say you spend on MAP? And by MAP I mean credit sales as well as grants.

10 more than half

4. Have you had any previous experience with MAP?

16 some

5. How long have you been in Government?

19 more than ten years

6a. Now let me ask you this: What would you list as the two most important problems facing MAP today? (For both of them, ask questions 6b through 11.)

(See Fig. 3.)

6b. Now let's take the problem of _____. Has this always been a problem, or where did it come from?

18 either problem more serious now

7 both always a problem

6c. How did it come to your attention?

4 distinct answers on either

7a. What can be done about it?

(See Fig. 5.)

7b. What else can be done?

7c. Did you devise these proposals, or where did they come from?

(See Fig. 4.)

8a. What have you personally done about the problem?

8 done nothing on one or both problems

15 done more than one thing on one or both problems

8b. Has this helped? How?

19 some success on at least one problem

8 some specific success could be cited on at least one
problem (N = 24)

8c. (If appropriate) Why hasn't your proposal been successful?

5 recipients cause failure

9. What do the other parts of the executive branch think should be
done about the problem of _____? (If necessary, probe for
ISA, State, AID, JCS.)

12 no U.S. disagreement on at least one problem

10. How much room for compromise is there between your desire to do
X and A's feeling Y should be done? (Where A is the agency with the
clearest difference of view on the problem.)

22 compromise easy on at least one problem

14 compromise hard on at least one problem (N = 21)

11. Does everyone here in ISA (JCS, etc.) feel as you do, or is
there some difference of opinion?

10 some here disagree on at least one problem (N = 22)

12. Now, for the kinds of issues we've been talking about, what
people or groups would you say have the most influence?

9 include self among influentials (by broadest count).

13a. What would you say is the role of the country team?

15 significant role (N = 23)

13b. Would you say that the country team makes too many independent decisions, or, on the other hand, would you say that Washington is too tight in its control of the program?

- 4 field too independent
- 6 Washington too tight
- 15 neither

14. How about the public -- the electorate. Do the top policymakers worry much about them when they are making decisions on issues like these?

- 19 Congress mentioned spontaneously (N = 21)
- 23 Congress mentioned here or as a major problem in Question 6 (N = 23)

15. Let me ask you a hypothetical question: if you had the final authority to make decisions on the kind of problem we've been talking about, would you go ahead with what you thought was right, or would you try to get general agreement? Why? (Probe for the amount of sacrifice, if any, they would make for the sake of agreement.)

- 14 no sacrifice for agreement (N = 23)

16. Some people enjoy taking part in conflicts or disputes between agencies, others don't want to get involved. How about you?

- 10 enjoy conflict (N = 22)

17. When one agency gets what it wants, does that usually mean that the others suffer, or is it usually possible for everyone to be pretty well satisfied?

- 9 others can be satisfied
- 3 at least heard out
- 11 lose
- 2 other

18a. (If appropriate) The problems we've been discussing are pretty well recognized as problems. Are there any problems that aren't sufficiently recognized? Which ones?

- 6 problem mentioned (N = 24)

18b. Have you done anything about this problem? What?

- 5 done something (N = 6)

18c. (If appropriate) Why weren't you successful?

- 1 some success (N = 6)
- 0 some specific success (N = 6)

19a. Now I'd like to ask you about the war between India and Pakistan two years ago. Are there any lessons for MAP from that experience? What would they be?

(See Fig. 7.)

19b. Do these lessons apply anywhere else? Where?

19c. Has the program been modified there?

19d. (If appropriate) Did the changes help?

19e. How do you know?

20. Now let me ask you about the recent crisis in the Near East. Did the India-Pakistan experience help meet these new problems? How?

(See Fig. 7.)

21a. Are there any lessons for MAP from the NE crisis? What would they be?

(See Fig. 7.)

21b. Where else are these lessons applicable?

21c. How do you think the programs there should be modified?

21d. Is this the kind of proposal about which there is much disagreement? Why is that?

22. When you think about how policy is made on the Military Assistance Program, how satisfied are you? Say, zero points means you are totally dissatisfied and ten points means you are totally satisfied; how would you place yourself? Why?

| | |
|----|---------------|
| 2 | 0-2 |
| 2 | 3-4 |
| 5 | 5-6 |
| 12 | 7-8 |
| 3 | 9-10 (N = 24) |

Information noted after interview:

Duration (8 more than an hour)

Whether respondent asked for copy of report (10 yes)

General impressions (18 more friendly than politeness required)

Special sensitivities displayed (18 none)

Points of special interest